

Vermont Community Broadband Board
Unapproved Governing Board Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2021
Held in MEGA meeting room,
112 State Street, Montpelier Vermont
Christine Hallquist
Executive Director
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10:01 am – meeting opened.

- Brian Otley indicated that he did not get some materials, Laura Sibilia corrected her email address.
- Roll call – Board members present; Patty Richards – chair, Dan Nelson, Holly Groschner, Laura Sibilia, Brian Otley.
- ***Motion to approve August 6, 2021 meeting minutes; Holly Groschner moved, Dan Nelson seconded – motion passed***
- Request made to include placeholder for possible executive session as a placeholder at the top of future agendas.
- ***Motion to approve agenda for this meeting; Laura Sibilia moved, Brian Otley seconded – motion passed***

Grant Process

A discussion ensued regarding the role of the DPS and the role of the VCBB. Concerns were voiced on the issue of how much the DPS will be charging to the VCBB for services and what services the VCBB is eligible to contract/hire on its own. The discussion included the process for releasing ARPA funds, the flow of the funds and the approval process.

- Request was made to bring in Maria Royle, Legislative Counsel, to help clarify the interpretation of ACT 71.
- A Board member suggested that one role of the Board is to gather and present grant opportunities
- What is the process to gain access to the funds?
- What will be the process for rewarding the funds?
- How will reconciliation occur, tracking for grant performance, key measures, etc.?
- What is the criteria; how are we going to ensure we are being consistent in the application of that criteria?

Staffing Discussion

A proposed organization chart was presented. Key discussion point centered on proposal to create the position of Deputy Director and fill the position internally. Action items coming out of this were:

- Develop (or use existing) job description for Deputy Director
- Develop (or use existing) job descriptions for each proposed position
- Hold on hiring to enable process. Continue to move forward with work on the Deputy Director position

- Get further definition on administrative responsibilities. Refine further the delineation of DPS and VCBB responsibilities.

CUD Pre-construction status presentations

- DVFiber presented by David Jones
 - 8000 underserved addresses
 - 800 miles of fiber planned
 - 35000 addresses passed
 - Feasibility study completed
 - Business plan completed
 - Note, these are rough estimates based on David's knowledge
 - Plan to own entire network, develop partnership with Operator
- Lamoille FiberNet presented by Jane Campbell
 - Feasibility study completed
 - Business plan completed
 - High Level Design completed
 - Looking at owning the entire network with a partner
- CV Fiber presented by Jeremy Hansen
 - Funding streams need to support continuous flow of contractors
 - Would like to have VCBB consider centralized purchasing for fiber
 - State-wide design should be supplemental to CUD design
 - Working on joint design with EC Fiber, CV Fiber, NEK Broadband and Washington Electric Cooperative
 - Estimated cost for detailed design is \$1.5 million
 - What will the impact be of centralized purchasing?
- NEK Broadband presented by Evan Carlson
 - 2800 of miles to construct
 - Finalizing design/construction with Mission Broadband
 - Pre-purchasing of assets would be helpful
 - Help with back-haul costs, interconnection points, and fiber counts is needed
 - Propose standardizing fiber counts, type of fiber
 - Getting manufacturing space allocated would be helpful
 - Involve the design engineering firms
- ValleyNet/EC Fiber presented by Chris Recchia
 - Some of the original towns may need to be rebuilt
 - Have added materials for new towns
 - Delivery this fall
 - Have vendors who will provide inventory
 - Will there be a buy America clause?
 - Grant cost benchmarks
 - Pole inventory - \$700/mile
 - Construction - \$35K/mile
 - Make ready and design - \$10K/mile

Grant Discussion

- Funding should be tied to milestones
- Business plan review will be part of the grant review

- Put together a timeline for each CUD
- Adjust grant process based on where each CUD is in the maturity model

Pre-Construction RFP (\$30 Million)

- Originally issued in June
- Provide the Board with the questionnaire that was used
- Define “pre-construction”
- “Make ready” is defined in ACT 71
- One key measure is run rate; addressed served over time
- Urgency is not the issue we should be considering. Need to define the gating issues.
- Is it possible to use VCUDA for grant and performance reporting?
- Develop a process for regular reporting
- RFP will be circulated to the Board for feedback and recommendations

Public Input

- Steve Huffaker
 - Concerned that centralized purchasing may introduce unnecessary delay
 - VCBB could offer standard set of hardware and do bulk purchasing
- David Jones
 - Will need firm funding commitment to continue progress
- Steve Whittaker
 - Don't rely on Legislative Counsel to interpret ACT 71
 - Services require E911 compliance
 - Statewide design is crucial. Look at the Huntsville and St. Louis model
 - Must comply with statutory requirements of 202
 - Should be building active ethernet
 - Process is inefficient
 - Should be addressing fixed and mobile wireless
 - Why are we protecting the cable companies?
- Steve runs out of time; Board recommends he submit additional comment in writing.

Meeting Schedule

- Set up schedule for 9 to 1 on each Thursday. Will need to look at this at the end of September.
- Next meeting August 26.

Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Brian Otley moved. Dan Nelson seconded. Motion passed

Meeting resumed at 12:45pm with no action taken.

Meeting adjourned with unanimous consent.